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SUBJECT: Embassy Guatemala: December 2009 Merida Report

REF: A) 09 STATE 114752; B) 09 GUATEMALA 1128; C) 09 GUATEMALA 1392  
D) 09 GUATEMALA 1410; E) 09 GUATEMALA 1412; F) 09 GUATEMALA 1424  
G) 09 GUATEMALA 1484

¶1. (U) In response to ref A, Post submits the information below detailing Embassy Guatemala's

Merida activities for December 2009.

#### Issues for Washington

¶2. (U) Allocation of Merida funding continues to be inconsistent and slow. Post requests

Washington's continued assistance in ensuring the speedy allocation of Merida funds to all agencies.

¶3. (U) Post appreciates Washington's assistance in securing the release of funding

for the UN-led International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). CICIG is an important USG partner in Guatemala and we want to extend our thanks to everyone in Washington who helped ensure continued funding for CICIG.

#### Internal Developments

¶4. (U) Violence statistics continue to present a disturbing trend. According to Guatemala's

national forensic institute (INACIF), from January 1 through November 30, 2009, there were 5,444 deaths by firearm or other, a 19 percent increase over the same period last year. Residential thefts increased 15.9 percent over last year; vehicle thefts increased 12.6 percent; and motorcycle thefts increased 12.4 percent. Commercial thefts were the only category in which thefts decreased - 15.4 percent fewer than in 2008. (Note: These police statistics include the thefts which occurred from January 1 through November 13, 2009. End Note.) On average, 16 to 18 cars and seven to eight motorcycles are stolen every day in Guatemala. In addition, 107 bus drivers were murdered from January 1 through November 30, 2009.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Post does not expect the security situation in Guatemala to improve

during 2010 -- the Colom administration will likely maintain its current focus on funding social programs rather than devote greater attention and resources to security issues during the coming year. This makes it all the more important to nurture successful police

units which are proactively combating crime. Per post's Merida 2.0 submission (Ref B), Merida-supported vetted units (e.g., DEA's Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU) and NAS's Special Methods Unit (UME), among others) should receive continued support. These units need additional communications equipment, vehicles to enhance their mobility and additional training to improve intelligence-gathering and coordination within the region. End Comment.

#### Implementation Activities

¶6. (U) On December 15, the Embassy inaugurated the model precinct in Mixco, a violent, gang-

infested suburb of Guatemala City. All Guatemalan justice sector institutions were represented and pledged their support. Minister of Government Raul Velasquez announced that he is working closely with the USG to open three additional model precincts as soon as personnel can be selected and vetted. Additionally, Velasquez stated that he is so satisfied with the model precinct concept that he wants it to be replicated in all precincts throughout Guatemala. The selection and vetting of the Mixco precinct's leadership, approximately 20 officers, has been accomplished through programs funded by the Merida initiative. However, the actual vetting of Mixco model precinct personnel has been conducted by Guatemalan polygraphers and other Guatemalan police personnel. The Police Athletic League, also funded by Merida, has been implemented in Mixco and involves over 500 youth-at-risk and approximately 40 parents in sports and cultural activities.

¶7. (U) In mid-December, the first classes of the English Access Scholarship Program in

Guatemala were held in the largely indigenous department of Quiche. Half of the 800,000 USD cost of this program is being funded through the Merida Initiative.

¶8. (U) The students selected for the Youth Ambassadors program (para 11) received an

extensive pre-departure briefing in late December.

¶9. (U) Post's Law Enforcement Working Group met on December 1. Post held its

Merida Initiative meeting on December 8.

#### Significant Merida Supported Host Nation Seizures

¶10. (SBU) USG law enforcement participation and/or intelligence played an important part in

seizures in December 2009:

- December 1 - Guatemala City International Airport:  
Seizure of 29,950 tablets of pseudoephedrine (Ref C).

- December 4 - Guatemala City International Airport:  
Seizure of 82,889 tablets of pseudoephedrine (Ref D).

- December 5 - Guatemala City International Airport:  
Seizure of 1.5 kilograms of heroin and arrest of two individuals, who are alleged to be drug couriers for an international heroin smuggling organization (Ref E).

- December 9 - Guatemala City: Seizure of 1,000,120 USD and arrest of one individual (Ref F).

- December 20 - Guatemala City International Airport:  
Seizure of 32,800 USD (Ref G).

#### The Month Ahead

¶11. (U) Below are post's planned activities for January 2010:

- Grantee Georgetown University (through its local partner) finished the selection process for students to participate in the Merida-funded Central American Youth Ambassadors Program. The Public Affairs Section participated in student interviews and made the final choice. A total of 10 bright but under-privileged students and one chaperone will travel to the United States on January 24 for a 3-week cultural immersion. Selected students come mainly from very poor areas of the Guatemalan highlands and represent the K'iche', Mam, and Q'anjob'al ethnic groups, among others.

- A group of three non-elite university students will travel to St. Michael's College in

Vermont for an 8-week Undergraduate Intensive English Language program funded through the Merida Initiative. Participants in this program represent a variety of departments and universities.

- The majority of students in the English Access program (700 in all) will begin classes in mid-to-late January.

- In early 2010, the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), partially-funded with Merida funds, will become

operational in Guatemala and provide fingerprint information to the Guatemalan justice sector, support the FBI Central American Fingerprint Initiative (CAF????) and the Regional Gang Initiative. The International Ballistics Identification System (IBIS), partially-funded with Merida funds, will also be donated to the National Civilian Police to provide ballistics information to link homicides in Guatemala, in the region and with U.S. law enforcement entities.

- During the first few months of 2010, the model precinct concept will be expanded to serve additional communities in Guatemala. The USG will assist in the selection, vetting and training of police and prosecutors to improve security in these areas. The actual vetting of police and prosecutors will be conducted by Guatemalan authorities. Training, technical support and donations will be made with Merida funds combined with bilateral funds.

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